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880212 MONTREAL CJAD 18:31 "INSIGHT"

SUBJECT: UNDER-FUNDING OF UNIVERSITIES
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-HOST: S. WALSH
-GUEST: K. WITTINGHAM

STEVE WALSH: AN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT REPORT, WHICH WAS PREPARED LAST YEAR, CONCLUDED CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WAS ONE OF A HALF DOZEN UNIVERSITIES IN THE PROVINCE WHICH ARE UNDER-FUNDED. A DELEGATION AT CONCORDIA'S BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETS WITH PREMIER BOURASSA ON MONDAY TO DISCUSS THE SCHOOL'S FUNDING PROBLEMS. KEN WITTINGHAM IS CONCORDIA'S PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR. HE JOINS US TONIGHT ON "INSIGHT." MR. WITTINGHAM, FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT NOT BE AWARE OF CONCORDIA'S FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES, WHY DON'T YOU OUTLINE THEM FOR US.

KEN WITTINGHAM: BASICALLY, OUR PROBLEMS DATE BACK 14 YEARS TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CONCORDIA BACK IN 1974. AT THAT TIME BOTH LOYOLA COLLEGE AND SIR GEORGE WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY, OUR TWO FOUNDING INSTITUTIONS, RECEIVED PER CAPITA FUNDING THAT WAS BELOW THE PROVINCIAL NORM, AND, IN ESSENCE, THAT BASIC PROBLEM HAS NEVER BEEN CORRECTED IN ALL THESE YEARS. ALTHOUGH THE DOLLAR AMOUNTS HAVE INCREASED OVER THE YEARS IN TERMS OF WHAT THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT GIVES US IN OPERATING FUNDS, THE PERCENTAGE HAS ALWAYS REMAINED BELOW THE PROVINCIAL AVERAGE. AND WHAT THAT MEANS IN A NUTSHELL IS THAT EVEN THOUGH WE ARE OFFERING IN MANY CASES THE SAME COURSES THAT ARE OFFERED AT CERTAIN OTHER UNIVERSITIES, WE RECEIVE LESS PER CAPITA TO TEACH THOSE COURSES THAN DO OUR COLLEAGUES AT THE OTHER UNIVERSITIES.

WALSH: CONCORDIA IS NOT THE ONLY UNIVERSITY AFFECTED BY THIS PROBLEM. CORRECT?

WITTINGHAM: NOT AT ALL. THERE ARE SEVERAL UNIVERSITIES WHO ARE MORE OR LESS CONSIDERED THE HAVE-NOTS, WHO, AGAIN FOR THE SAME HISTORICAL REASONS, ARE RECEIVING LESS THAN THE PROVINCIAL AVERAGE. AND, SIMPLY, THE GOVERNMENTS, OR SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS IN QUEBEC, HAVE NEVER CORRECTED THE BASIC FUNDING FORMULA. THEY HAVE ALL MADE NOISES AT ELECTION TIMES AND AT OTHER TIMES THAT THEY WOULD DO SOMETHING TO MAKE THE SYSTEM MORE EQUITABLE, BUT IN ALL THESE YEARS (IT'S BEEN MORE THAN A DECADE NOW) NOTHING HAS EVER BEEN DONE. AND THAT INITIAL PROBLEM, AS I SAID, IS COMPOUNDED EACH AND EVERY YEAR.

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WALSH: WHY IS THERE SUCH A DISPARITY IN THE FIRST PLACE-- THE AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT SOME SCHOOLS RECEIVE FROM QUEBEC AND THE AMOUNT YOU AND THOSE "HAVE-NOTS," AS YOU CALLED THEM, ARE GETTING?

WITTINGHAM: BASICALLY, BECAUSE NO ONE IN QUEBEC CITY HAS BEEN ABLE TO BITE THE BULLETS AND COME UP WITH A MORE RATIONAL FUNDING FORMULA.

WALSH: BUT HOW DO THEY GET AWAY WITH IT?

WITTINGHAM: WELL, THEY CONTROL THE PURSE STRINGS. WE (ALL THE UNIVERSITIES, NOT JUST CONCORDIA) HAVE BEEN ASKING REPEATEDLY OVER THE YEARS THAT SOMETHING BE DONE TO MAKE THE SYSTEM MORE RESPONSIVE TO REAL NEEDS. AND THAT'S ALL WE ARE ASKING FOR AT CONCORDIA. WE ARE PRESENTING OUR ACTUAL EXPENSES AND ASKING THE GOVERNMENT TO COVER THOSE EXPENSES. THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ANY QUESTION THAT OUR FIGURES ARE INACCURATE OR WRONG. STUDY AFTER STUDY THAT'S BEEN DONE DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS, BOTH BY PEOPLE IN THE MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND GROUPS LIKE THE CONSEIL DES UNIVERSITES, WHICH IS AN ADVISORY BODY TO THE MINISTER, HAVE ALL CONCURRED THAT CONCORDIA'S FIGURES ARE RIGHT, THAT THE SYSTEM IS UNFAIR, THAT WE ARE NOT RECEIVING ENOUGH MONEY TO DO THE JOB THAT WE ARE EXPECTED TO DO. YET, DESPITE ALL THOSE VERY POSITIVE COMMENTS CONGRATULATING US FOR THE GREAT WORK WE DO, THE POLITICIANS HAVE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO COME UP WITH A PROPER FUNDING FORMULA. AND, YOU ARE ASKING ME WHY? I DON'T HAVE AN ANSWER FOR THAT.

WALSH: HOW MUCH MORE MONEY DO YOU NEED? WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKING FOR WHEN YOU MEET WITH THE PREMIER ON MONDAY?

WITTINGHAM: WE ARE NOT ASKING FOR A SPECIFIC DOLLAR AMOUNT BECAUSE WE ARE REASONABLE PEOPLE AS WELL, AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS IN A TIGHT FINANCIAL SITUATION. EVERYONE IS ASKING FOR MORE MONEY, NO MATTER WHAT SECTOR THEY ARE IN, BE IT THE HOSPITAL SECTOR OR WHAT HAVE YOU. WE COULD ASK FOR THE MOON. WE WOULD LOVE TO HAVE $100 MILLION. WE WOULD LOVE TO HAVE $200 MILLION. ANYONE WITH A GREAT AMOUNT OF MONEY COULD DO A LOT MORE THAN THEY ARE DOING RIGHT NOW. BUT WE ARE BEING REASONABLE AND REALISTIC. AND ALL WE ARE SAYING IS THAT WE WANT TO BE TREATED ON AN EQUAL BASIS WITH THE OTHER UNIVERSITIES. FROM OUR POINT OF VIEW, IT'S SORT OF A TWO-STEP PROCESS: WE WANT TO OBTAIN EQUITABLE FUNDING, AT THAT POINT, ONCE ALL THE UNIVERSITIES ARE ON THE SAME LEVEL, WE CAN ALL JOIN FORCES AND PERHAPS LOBBY FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING. YOU ARE GETTING INTO A REAL POLITICAL BATTLE AT THAT POINT AND A PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT IN A SENSE, TOO, THAT DOES THE GOVERNMENT WANT TO SPEND MORE

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ON EDUCATING FUTURE GENERATIONS THAN IT DOES RIGHT NOW ON IMMEDIATE JOB CREATION PROGRAMS OR THINGS OF THIS NATURE. DEBATES LIKE THAT ARE SECONDARY AT THE MOMENT. THEY ARE A LITTLE WAYS DOWN THE ROAD. BEFORE WE EVEN GET INTO THAT WE HAVE GOT TO START AND JUST PROVIDE A LITTLE EQUITY IN THE SYSTEM.

WALSH: YOU HAVE RECEIVED SOME EXTRA FUNDING FROM QUEBEC, THOUGH, HAVEN'T YOU?

WITTINGHAM: OH, YES. WE ARE VERY PLEASED. THAT'S WHY WE WERE CAUGHT IN A BIT OF A DILEMMA, IF I CAN GIVE YOU A BIT OF BACKGROUND. GOING BACK TO APRIL 1987 WHEN GERALD D. LEVESQUE CAME DOWN WITH THE LAST PROVINCIAL BUDGET, HE ANNOUNCED THAT THERE WOULD BE AN INFUSION OF $40 MILLION INTO THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM. THAT'S $40 MILLION OF NEW MONEY, OF EXTRA MONEY. AND WE WERE VERY PLEASED. AND WE HAVE CONGRATULATED BOTH THE EDUCATION MINISTER CLAUDE RYAN AND THE PREMIER FOR HAVING THE WHEREWITHAL. BUT SOMETHING HAPPENED BETWEEN APRIL AND THE FALL. DURING THE BUDGET SPEECH, THE FINANCE MINISTER SAID THAT A LARGE PORTION OF THE $40 MILLION WOULD GO TOWARDS ELIMINATING THIS HISTORIC UNDER-FUNDING THAT WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT AMONGST SEVERAL UNIVERSITIES. WE DIDN'T TWIST HIS ARM TO GET HIM TO SAY THAT. IT WAS LIKE A GIFT THAT WAS BEING GIVEN TO US.

AND IN OUR NAIVETE, I GUESS, CONCORDIA PRESUMED THAT WE WOULD OBTAIN A LARGE SLICE OF THIS EXTRA MONEY BECAUSE WE WERE ONE OF IF NOT THE MOST UNDER FUNDED UNIVERSITY IN THE PROVINCE, AND THAT'S NOT JUST US SAYING THAT, BUT EVERYONE HAS SAID THAT DOWN THROUGH THE YEARS. TO OUR DISMAY, WHEN THE EDUCATION MINISTER FINALLY RELEASED THE EXACT FIGURES, THE ACTUAL THAT AMOUNT WAS TO BE GIVEN TO THE UNIVERSITIES TO CORRECT THIS HISTORIC UNDER-FUNDING WAS ONLY $3.75 MILLION. SO THERE HAD BEEN A DROP FROM $40 TO $3.75 MILLION. AND OF THAT AMOUNT, CONCORDIA WAS GIVEN $183,000. AND WE WERE SHOCKED. WE JUST COULD NOT BELIEVE THAT A GOVERNMENT THAT HAS SAID IT WAS COMMITTED TO TRYING TO ELIMINATE THIS HISTORIC UNDER-FUNDING WOULD PROVIDE US WITH A FIGURE WHICH IS INSULTING. I MEAN, THERE IS NOT OTHER WORD THAT CAN BE USED TO DESCRIBE IT.

WALSH: THE EDUCATION MINISTER IS GOING TO BE AT THAT MEETING, AND ONE OF CLAUDE RYAN'S AIDES HAS ALREADY MADE IT CLEAR CONCORDIA SHOULD NOT EXPECT ANY IMMEDIATE RESULTS.

WITTINGHAM: WELL, AS YOU KNOW, A NUMBER OF PROTESTS WERE LAUNCHED LAST FALL WHEN WE REALIZED WE WEREN'T GETTING ANYWHERE GOING THROUGH NORMAL CHANNELS. THE DOORS WERE BLOCKED. THERE WAS A DEMONSTRATION, AS YOU KNOW, IN QUEBEC CITY AT THAT THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THE MEETING WAS HELD

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WITH MR. RYAN THAT DAY AND HE GAVE US A FLAT NO. HE SAID THAT THE FIGURES HE HAD ANNOUNCED WERE FINAL, BUT WE COULD NOT ACCEPT THAT. SO WE APPEALED ABOVE HIS HEAD TO THE PREMIER, AND IT HAS TAKEN THIS LONG FOR THE MEETING TO BE HELD. IT WAS SUPPOSED TO TAKE PLACE EARLIER IN JANUARY. THERE WERE REASONS WHY IT WAS DELAYED. BUT WE HAVE A LEGITIMATE CASE. THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT OUR CASE IS A RATIONAL ONE AND A LEGITIMATE ONE, AND ALL WE CAN DO IS PRESENT OUR CASE TO THE PREMIER AND HOPE THAT HE WILL BE ABLE TO SEE THE RIGHTNESS OF OUR CAUSE AND PERHAPS CONVINCE THE EDUCATION MINISTER TO CHANGE HIS MIND.

WALSH: AND IF YOU ARE STOPPED COLD IN THIS BID FOR ADDITIONAL FUNDING, WHAT DOES CONCORDIA DO? CAN WE EXPECT MORE DEMONSTRATIONS IN THE PROVINCE?

WITTINGHAM: WELL, THE ISSUE IS A COMPLICATED ONE. THE FIGURES THAT WE HAVE RIGHT NOW COVER THE NEXT TWO YEARS. MR. RYAN, TO HIS CREDIT, HAS PROMISED THAT HE WILL COME UP WITH A PERMANENT FUNDING FORMULA, SEEING THAT ALL THE UNIVERSITIES HAVE ALL THAT'S WANTED, AN EQUITABLE AND FAIR FUNDING FORMULA. HE IS SAYING THAT FORMULA WILL BE INTRODUCED TWO YEARS DOWN THE ROAD. WHAT GOT US SO UPSET HERE AT CONCORDIA IS THAT WHEN W SAW THE FIGURES THAT WERE BEING USED (THE $183,000-FIGURE, FOR INSTANCE, I MENTIONED EARLIER), THAT SORT OF FIGURE BEING USED IN THIS INTERIM TWO-YEAR PERIOD, WE PRESUME THAT YOU CAN CALL IT A "TRIAL BALLOON" IF YOU WANT OR THAT A PRECEDENCE WAS BEING SET, AND THAT WHEN THE FINAL LONG-TERM FUNDING FORMULA IS BROUGHT DOWN TWO YEARS FROM NOW (WE HOPE IT WILL BE BROUGHT DOWN), CONCORDIA WILL STILL FIND ITSELF AT THE BOTTOM RUNG OF THE LADDER. SO ONE OF THE KEY MESSAGES WE INTEND TO PRESENT TO PREMIER BOURASSA ON MONDAY IS THAT WHEN THAT FINAL FUNDING FORMULA DOES COME DOWN THE TUBES, WE HAVE TO BE IN A POSITION IN SUCH A WAY THAT WE CAN PROVIDE THE EDUCATIONAL SERVICES THAT THIS GOVERNMENT AND THIS PROVINCE WANT US TO PROVIDE. WE HAVE 26,000 STUDENTS HERE. CONCORDIA HAS BEEN GROWING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS. OUR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN EXPANDING. A LOT OF PEOPLE STILL HAVE THIS IMAGE OF CONCORDIA AS SORT OF THAT SMALL, THE OTHER ENGLISH-LANGUAGE UNIVERSITY IN THIS CITY, BUT WE HAVE BEEN EXPANDING ENORMOUSLY IN RECENT YEARS. AND THE THING WE FIND IS THAT WHENEVER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS COME HER, INCLUDING MR. RYAN, WHO HAS VISITED THIS INSTITUTION ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS, THEY ARE (INAUDIBLE) IN THEIR PRAISE OF WHAT CONCORDIA HAS DONE WITH SUCH LIMITED RESOURCES. AND WE ARE SAYING, WE SAID REPEATEDLY, JUST GIVE US A LITTLE BIT MORE MONEY AND SEE WHAT WE CAN DO. IF WE HAVE DONE THAT MUCH WITH SO LITTLE, IMAGINE WHAT WE COULD DO IF WE HAD DECENT ADEQUATE FUNDING. AND THAT'S THE MESSAGE WE ARE GOING TO BE GIVING TO THE

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PREMIER. YOU KNOW, IT'S NOT JUST CONCORDIA. I MENTIONED THIS PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT EARLIER. THE FUTURE LIES WITH AN EDUCATED POPULATION. AND IF QUEBEC IS GOING TO COMPETE ON WORLD MARKETS, LET ALONE CANADIAN AND NORTH AMERICAN MARKETS, WE HAVE GOT TO HAVE TRAINED YOUNG PEOPLE DOWN THE ROAD WHO WILL BE ABLE TO FILL THE POSITIONS THAT ARE OPENING UP. AND IF THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT WILLING TO INVEST IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION, THIS PROVINCE AS A SOCIETY IS GOING TO PAY FOR THAT A FEW YEARS DOWN THE ROAD.

WALSH: THANK YOU MR. WITTINGHAM.

WITTINGHAM: MY PLEASURE.

WALSH: KEN WITTINGHAM IS THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTION AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY. 12

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